

ARMY LIFE

By Capt. Charles King, U. S. A.

(Copyright, 1896, by F. Tennyson Neely.)

CHAPTER I.

There was more than one reason why Fanny McLane should not have accepted the Graftons' invitation to visit them at Fort Sedgwick. Perhaps that was why she never mentioned the matter to her sister, Mrs. Parry, until that lady surprised her in the midst of the packing.

"Where are you going, Fan?" was the query, half aggrieved, half aggressive—the tone in which an elder often addresses a younger sister who has evidently presumed to contemplate some journey without previous consultation and consent.

"I? Why, I thought you knew. Going to spend a week or two with the Graftons."

"The Graftons? Fanny McLane! You don't mean you're going to Fort Sedgwick?"

"That's their station," answered Mrs. McLane, with slight accent of color.

Mrs. Parry had not yet seated herself. She was still standing at the open doorway, glancing quickly from trunk to trunk in the sunshiny but littered room. Now she took a step forward, hesitated one moment as she looked at the maid servant bending busily over a great Saratoga, and in dumb show intimated to her sister that she wished that opened, open-earred domestic elsewhere.

But Mrs. McLane was blind to any signals. Indeed, she seemed at the moment to find it necessary to supervise some of Annette's work, noting which symptom Mrs. Parry's scruples vanished.

"Fanny, you know perfectly well that's the last place on earth you should go to now, and Mr. McLane not a year in his grave."

A redder spot burns in each fair cheek as the young widow turns quickly and faces her accuser.

"And why not, pray? The Graftons are the oldest, dearest friends I have, at least she is."

"And Randy Merriam— isn't there, I suppose— or his plain wife?"

"Mr. Merriam's whereabouts are matters of entire indifference to me, as you ought to have the decency to know, Charlotte."

"Ought to be matters of indifference, I concede, but I have grave doubts as to whether they are, as you say."

"Then keep your doubts and suspicions to yourself, Charlotte," said Mrs. McLane, with brimming eyes and burning cheeks. "This is no place to speak of such matters," and the brimming eyes—which their owner tries hard to induce to blaze instead of brim—turn significantly toward Annette, busily packing and assiduously feigning unconsciousness, and then almost defiantly turn back to her sister.

"I know perfectly well what you mean, Frances," responds the elder, and when Charlotte and Frances were adopted instead of "Lot" and "Fan" it meant that the sororal relations were more than strained.

"I gave you every signal ingenuously could suggest, but you wouldn't see. You didn't want to see, because you thought that"—and here Mrs. Parry indicates the kneeling Annette with a nod of her very stylishly coiffed head—"that would keep me from speaking. But this is a case where duty cannot be neglected. Fanny, are you in your right senses?"

"In—very one of them," says Charlotte, and Ned's mean to listen to abuse. You know perfectly well Dr. Mellon said I needed change."

"Well, then, go to New Orleans, go to Bermuda, go to St. Augustine—go to St. Petersburg, Fan—anywhere on earth rather than Fort Sedgwick—anywhere under heaven except where Randolph Merriam happens to be—unless you would have me believe you lost to—"

But here, with solemn mien, enters the male biped who officiates as butler, hall boy and major domo at the Clarendon Flats—a card upon the silver in his pudgy hand, and Mrs. Parry nearly chokes in the necessity for sudden stop.

"Ask Mr. Swinburne up," says Mrs. McLane, promptly, barely glancing at the black bordered card and evidently glad of the interruption. "Now, Charlotte, not another word unless you wish me to show how indignant I am to every visitor who comes in," and Mrs. McLane is busy talking her flushed cheeks already. "How does my dear sister add, turning inquiringly toward the defeated elder, sure that whatever source of quarrel there may be, that, at least, is subject for truck."

"Your hair is all right," responded her sister, with marked emphasis and as marked a sense of baffled purpose. "I wish the rest of your head were as well balanced. You don't expect me to see Mr. Swinburne, I suppose?"

"Mr. Swinburne certainly doesn't expect to see you. He is coming mainly on business."

"You might far better listen to his business, as you call it, even this soon, than go near Mr. Merriam."

"Charlotte, I will not listen to you. If you cannot stay here without insulting me with every other word, you would much better leave the house, and I will not see you speak—sensibly."

And with this Mrs. McLane darts past her sister into the passageway and so on to the parlor front of her suite of apartments just as the little electric indicator tells that the elevator has stopped and that some one is at the entrance door.

It is Swinburne, a well-preserved, nut-ton-chop whiskered, carefully groomed fellow of forty-five, and Swinburne bows delightedly over the slender white hand of the pretty and youthful widow and disappears with her within the cosy parlor.

"How long has Mrs. McLane been packing?" asks Mrs. Parry presently of the maid.

"How long, mum? Oh, two or three days only, though we got down the trunks, mums, on Wednesday last," is Annette's reply.

"Four trunks and four days packing to spend a week or so at a frontier post," says Mrs. Parry to herself, with increasing wrath. Then turning, she sweeps through the hallway with the mien of an offended queen, passes the parlor door with barely a glance at the bright, cheery interior, lets herself out with a snap and a slam and stands angrily tapping her daintily booted foot on the rug in front of the cage until the elevator noiselessly answers her signal and then lowers her to the mosaic pavement of the ground floor.

"Mrs. Parry, a rising and increasing lawyer, she says to her coachman as she enters the waiting carriage and is whirled rapidly away down the avenue, past the dancing waters of the lake.

have to do, Mrs. Parry, when you come to this office for advice is to pay the customary retaining fee," he responds as he takes her carefully gloved hand in his long fingers and bends forward for a kiss. She recoils, pleased, yet provoked. He should have been started at her revelation, even though he did wish for a kiss.

"Is that the customary retaining fee, sir?" she asks, demurely, forgetful for the moment of the portentous news she brings. "I hope you had quite a number of feminine clients."

"So many that my partners find it as difficult to straighten out their accounts as I do their strokes. Pardon me, Mrs. Parry, did you say I was retained? If so," and the junior member of the distinguished firm of Graeme, Rayburn & Parry again bends downward toward the glowing face.

"You're absurd, Ned, if that's what you mean," replies Mrs. Parry, secretly delighted at the loverlike ways of her lord. "I've a mind not to pay—anything. You shouldn't charge members of the family."

"I don't," he answers, reflectively, "in all cases. There's Aunt Mildred, for instance, and Aunt Charlotte and grand-mama, but you and Fan now—"

"Fan! Why should she k—consult you?"

"Why, do you know, Lot, I've never once asked her. She might select some other fellow in the firm and k—consult him."

"Ned, you're simply horrid now. I never did like you when you tried to be funny. You know I never interrupt you here unless I'm troubled about something, and you're just laughing at me instead of sympathizing," and Mrs. Ned pretends to pull away her hands, but conspicuously fails.

"One of the first principles of my large and successful practice, Mrs. Parry, is to be in all cases where I have reason to believe the client will subsequently act contrary to my advice. When you have—"

"Ah, that will have to do, Ned, presume, though it came with a bad grace. And now you say Fan is going to Sedgwick?"

"Yes, and Randy Merriam's hardly been married a month longer than Mr. McLane's been dead."

"Astounding coincidence! But Brandy is married, isn't he?"

"Randy, Ned, not Brandy—how your mind runs to such things."

"Well, toward 5 p. m. the firm does feel like running to such things, my best beloved, and is only deterred from doing so by the fact that a touch of the button makes it do the running. What shall I order for you?" And Mr. Parry transfers her hand to its mate reposing in his left and stretches forth the right toward his desk.

"I want nothing," she answered, "but a—appealing, and no more nonsense. What, I do?"

"Are you sure you can do just what I tell you, Lot?" he asks, a tone of light playfulness in his eyes, despite the half teasing smile.

"Of course I can. Don't I—always?"

"Well—ahem—I have known instances. But you will do just what I say?"

"Yes, Ned, I will."

"Then, your ladyship, let her go and don't worry. I don't, I haven't, a bit."

"Why, then, you have known she was going—she has told you?"

"She hasn't. I learned it from Swinburne."

"When?"

"Three days ago."

"And you never told me, Ned," reproachfully.

"Fact," says Ned, sagely and sententiously. "You would have protested. She would have been the more obstinately determined. There would have been a row, and all to no purpose. Fan has had her own way since she cut her first baby tooth, and there's nothing on earth so independent as a well-to-do young widow. Swinburne's found that out."

"Ned, I can't bear Swinburne, but I'd rather she'd marry him—as soon as it's decent to marry anybody—than go out there and fling herself in Randy Merriam's way again. Everybody knows the story."

"Yes, it was rather a public exhibition of miffen giving, I'll admit," says Parry, reflectively, "and not two years ago either," he added. Then suddenly, "What sort of fellow is Captain Grafton?"

"A very dignified, majestic personage—a good deal older than she is, you know, but she's devoted to him and he to her. There's a woman who doesn't do as she pleases, let me tell you. Captain Grafton will have no nonsense going on under his roof, and I'll tell you that."

"She thinks to resume her old flirtation with Merriam, she'll have to blind Grafton first."

"My love, you forget the compact. You're not to tell Fan anything except good-bye. Yes—you may send our respectful regards to him. He's a particularly nice fellow, if she did throw him over for old McLane and his fortune. And, Mrs. Parry, I shouldn't be surprised if our particularly pert and pretty sister were taught a very valuable lesson. Therefore, do I say let her go. G—I mean let her go. And, talking of going, suppose you drive me home with you. We'll stop and see Fan a minute—and Swinburne."

"And stop they do, finding the broker magnate safe there, though in evident straits, it is possible for a day or two to look pleased at the coming of visitors in the midst of even a prolonged tete-a-tete," Swinburne doesn't. He looks infinitely distressed, and Parry doesn't fail to remark it.

"Hullo, Swinburne. Who'd a thought of your here at this hour? I supposed you'd never see a day like this for a drive, yet your team isn't at the door."

"—I—I had business to discuss with Mrs. McLane before he sent him to the West—a journey which I had much hoped to have Mrs. Parry had dissuaded him from making."

"Oh, bless you, no," responds Parry, cheerfully. "The doctor advises change of scene and air, doesn't he, Fan? And there's no scenery more beautiful than this. There's no scenery more beautiful than this, and there's more air than they know what to do with ten hours out of twelve, week doesn't it."

"Then I presume the residents of the post must be unusually charming to offset such monotony of landscape and such objectionable climate," says Swinburne, stuffily, and looking ruefully at the fair young widow. "I have not the honor of anybody's acquaintance here," he adds.

"So," says Parry. "Why, there's Captain and Mrs. Grafton, old friends of Fan's, you know—that is Mrs. Grafton, and there's Lieutenant Merriam—splendid fellow, that. We know him as well when he was on duty at the Point. And there's Minturn, of the artillery, who's often when Merriam was pillared. I'm about Fan here—Oh, yes, there's a raft of pleasant people there."

Mrs. Parry's pretty face at this juncture is a study. She is flushed, almost tearful; ready to pull Ned Parry's hair in her wrath, yet hardly able to resist the temptation to smile at Swinburne, who sits in open-mouthed dismay. For downright mischief a brother-in-law has opportunities accorded no other mortal, and Parry is at once his torment and her delight. Mrs. McLane has been known to say that Charlotte took a very mean advantage of her in front of the cage until the elevator before he ever saw the sunshine of her own lovely blue eyes.

"Very little alike were these two sisters, despite the fact that they had lived most of their life together. Educated abroad by a benevolent aunt after the death of their devoted mother, the girls had returned to America the great year of the Columbian fete, and Charlotte, the elder by two years, had met Ned Parry, a rising and increasing lawyer, before they had been home a month, and was engaged to him before the autumn

leaves were falling—before Fan even dreamed that anything of the kind was in contemplation, for she, the simple, the simply deliciously delightful time at the Point. Harriet Palmer, her especial friend at school, both at home and abroad, had married Captain Grafton early that spring. Fan making almost her first appearance in society as one of the bridesmaids on that occasion, and being much impressed with the devotion of the groomsmen assigned to her, a handsome, soldierly fellow by the name of Merriam, the son of an officer, but, being of the Captain's regiment and conveniently stationed at West Point, he had been called into requisition with others of his cloth, and a very pretty wedding they had had, and then, as luck would have it, Grafton himself was offered a commission in the regular army, and he was called to the far frontier so soon after their marriage, he accepted it, and there they spent the summer, and then Mrs. Parry and the Haywards joined them at Mrs. Grafton's urgent request, and there did Mr. Randolph Merriam fall deeply and devotedly in love with Charlotte, and no one wondered. By far and away she was the prettiest girl at the Point that summer, and Merriam was conceded to be a mighty lucky fellow. And so it was after the announcement of Charlotte Hayward's forthcoming marriage to Edward Parry, he allowed himself to be congratulated upon his engagement to her younger sister.

And he had every right to consider himself engaged. She had accepted his attentions, his devotion, eventually, and she had also his presents. He had called upon Aunt and Uncle Mellen in New York, the guardians of the girls, and started them all equally surprised by the announcement that Miss Hayward had accepted the offer of his heart and had conditioned only on their consent, which he brought them to give.

"I own I never thought of her marrying in the army," said Aunt Charlotte, as do other aunts and mothers after their girls have been campaigning at the Point.

"What income, if any, have you outside your pay?" was Uncle Mellen's question at the point of interrogation.

"Nothing, sir."

"Well, neither has she. That is, what has is so small it wouldn't keep that extravagant child in gloves and had better be sensible and think it over."

Randy Merriam did think it over, but all to no purpose. The more he thought, the more he declared himself hopelessly and irrevocably in love, and as Miss Parry took kindly to his protestations and Parry and Charlotte took kindly to him and sympathized with the soldier's love, who was evidently much of a gentleman and so much in love, it resulted in his being permitted to go on duty at the Point, and the wedding was held in the winter, Merriam had a good reason for believing that, despite the fact that the wedding reception held at the Mellen's beautiful home would be one in which he would be vitally interested.

Well, he was, but in the way or manner expected. In fact, he did not attend the ceremony or the reception; indeed, he was not bidden. A very disagreeable thing, and he was within a month after the Parry-Hayward wedding, one that overwhelmed him with mortification and distress, and caused no little indignation among his comrades.

Everybody knew Randy Merriam was in debt. He made no secret of it. He was extravagant in his tastes, had incurred obligations before going on duty at the Point, and found it impossible to "catch up" there. There were three or four accounts he had been asked to settle, and he had been running some time, but he put them off from month to month, hoping that he might soon be able to obtain possession of a small sum of money left by his father, who died a few years before. It was only a few thousand dollars, yet even that had been contested, together with a number of similar bequests, and the legal complications had been as exasperating as the law's delay could make them. One day soon after Charlotte's wedding Merriam was summoned to the presence of the superintendent and was regretfully told that four of his creditors had united to an appeal to the War Department, and the matter had been referred to him as post commander. Merriam was confounded. He had seen and talked with one of them only a few weeks before, and no such action had even been hinted at. Nor did he know that any one of their number was aware of his indebtedness to the others. Frankly he had told Miss Parry the matter before he told her of his love, but it made, apparently, no impression on her. "Let me have a few thousand dollars, and I'll be able to pay them ten times over," he had said, and later to Parry, who had grown like him, and who, as a lawyer, though his little inheritance could not be much longer withheld. It would free him; it would very prettily furnish them with a few hundred dollars to the fore. He remembered, too, that Uncle Mellen had made some inquiries of him, and that in perfect frankness he had told him that he was just at the moment when he was full of hope and happiness, came this cruel mortification. Such action on the part of the creditors was a very bad thing, and the superintendent said, it was a solemn fact. Deeply chagrined, he told the colonel the whole story, and the colonel was full of sympathy, but as full of sense.

"I'm sorry, Merriam," said he, "but there's only one thing for you to do, tell them the fact, and let them have their inheritance. When lawyers once get hold of an estate it's dollars to dimes nobody else ever does, and by the time judgment is rendered it's a very small thing to be eaten up in fees and innumerable charges. You cannot count on a cent of it. You cannot say anything, speak for a drive, yet your team isn't at the door."

"—I—I had business to discuss with Mrs. McLane before he sent him to the West—a journey which I had much hoped to have Mrs. Parry had dissuaded him from making."

"Oh, bless you, no," responds Parry, cheerfully. "The doctor advises change of scene and air, doesn't he, Fan? And there's no scenery more beautiful than this. There's no scenery more beautiful than this, and there's more air than they know what to do with ten hours out of twelve, week doesn't it."

"Then I presume the residents of the post must be unusually charming to offset such monotony of landscape and such objectionable climate," says Swinburne, stuffily, and looking ruefully at the fair young widow. "I have not the honor of anybody's acquaintance here," he adds.

"So," says Parry. "Why, there's Captain and Mrs. Grafton, old friends of Fan's, you know—that is Mrs. Grafton, and there's Lieutenant Merriam—splendid fellow, that. We know him as well when he was on duty at the Point. And there's Minturn, of the artillery, who's often when Merriam was pillared. I'm about Fan here—Oh, yes, there's a raft of pleasant people there."

Mrs. Parry's pretty face at this juncture is a study. She is flushed, almost tearful; ready to pull Ned Parry's hair in her wrath, yet hardly able to resist the temptation to smile at Swinburne, who sits in open-mouthed dismay. For downright mischief a brother-in-law has opportunities accorded no other mortal, and Parry is at once his torment and her delight. Mrs. McLane has been known to say that Charlotte took a very mean advantage of her in front of the cage until the elevator before he ever saw the sunshine of her own lovely blue eyes.

"Very little alike were these two sisters, despite the fact that they had lived most of their life together. Educated abroad by a benevolent aunt after the death of their devoted mother, the girls had returned to America the great year of the Columbian fete, and Charlotte, the elder by two years, had met Ned Parry, a rising and increasing lawyer, before they had been home a month, and was engaged to him before the autumn

leaves were falling—before Fan even dreamed that anything of the kind was in contemplation, for she, the simple, the simply deliciously delightful time at the Point. Harriet Palmer, her especial friend at school, both at home and abroad, had married Captain Grafton early that spring. Fan making almost her first appearance in society as one of the bridesmaids on that occasion, and being much impressed with the devotion of the groomsmen assigned to her, a handsome, soldierly fellow by the name of Merriam, the son of an officer, but, being of the Captain's regiment and conveniently stationed at West Point, he had been called into requisition with others of his cloth, and a very pretty wedding they had had, and then, as luck would have it, Grafton himself was offered a commission in the regular army, and he was called to the far frontier so soon after their marriage, he accepted it, and there they spent the summer, and then Mrs. Parry and the Haywards joined them at Mrs. Grafton's urgent request, and there did Mr. Randolph Merriam fall deeply and devotedly in love with Charlotte, and no one wondered. By far and away she was the prettiest girl at the Point that summer, and Merriam was conceded to be a mighty lucky fellow. And so it was after the announcement of Charlotte Hayward's forthcoming marriage to Edward Parry, he allowed himself to be congratulated upon his engagement to her younger sister.

And he had every right to consider himself engaged. She had accepted his attentions, his devotion, eventually, and she had also his presents. He had called upon Aunt and Uncle Mellen in New York, the guardians of the girls, and started them all equally surprised by the announcement that Miss Hayward had accepted the offer of his heart and had conditioned only on their consent, which he brought them to give.

"I own I never thought of her marrying in the army," said Aunt Charlotte, as do other aunts and mothers after their girls have been campaigning at the Point.

"What income, if any, have you outside your pay?" was Uncle Mellen's question at the point of interrogation.

"Nothing, sir."

"Well, neither has she. That is, what has is so small it wouldn't keep that extravagant child in gloves and had better be sensible and think it over."

Randy Merriam did think it over, but all to no purpose. The more he thought, the more he declared himself hopelessly and irrevocably in love, and as Miss Parry took kindly to his protestations and Parry and Charlotte took kindly to him and sympathized with the soldier's love, who was evidently much of a gentleman and so much in love, it resulted in his being permitted to go on duty at the Point, and the wedding was held in the winter, Merriam had a good reason for believing that, despite the fact that the wedding reception held at the Mellen's beautiful home would be one in which he would be vitally interested.

Well, he was, but in the way or manner expected. In fact, he did not attend the ceremony or the reception; indeed, he was not bidden. A very disagreeable thing, and he was within a month after the Parry-Hayward wedding, one that overwhelmed him with mortification and distress, and caused no little indignation among his comrades.

Everybody knew Randy Merriam was in debt. He made no secret of it. He was extravagant in his tastes, had incurred obligations before going on duty at the Point, and found it impossible to "catch up" there. There were three or four accounts he had been asked to settle, and he had been running some time, but he put them off from month to month, hoping that he might soon be able to obtain possession of a small sum of money left by his father, who died a few years before. It was only a few thousand dollars, yet even that had been contested, together with a number of similar bequests, and the legal complications had been as exasperating as the law's delay could make them. One day soon after Charlotte's wedding Merriam was summoned to the presence of the superintendent and was regretfully told that four of his creditors had united to an appeal to the War Department, and the matter had been referred to him as post commander. Merriam was confounded. He had seen and talked with one of them only a few weeks before, and no such action had even been hinted at. Nor did he know that any one of their number was aware of his indebtedness to the others. Frankly he had told Miss Parry the matter before he told her of his love, but it made, apparently, no impression on her. "Let me have a few thousand dollars, and I'll be able to pay them ten times over," he had said, and later to Parry, who had grown like him, and who, as a lawyer, though his little inheritance could not be much longer withheld. It would free him; it would very prettily furnish them with a few hundred dollars to the fore. He remembered, too, that Uncle Mellen had made some inquiries of him, and that in perfect frankness he had told him that he was just at the moment when he was full of hope and happiness, came this cruel mortification. Such action on the part of the creditors was a very bad thing, and the superintendent said, it was a solemn fact. Deeply chagrined, he told the colonel the whole story, and the colonel was full of sympathy, but as full of sense.

"I'm sorry, Merriam," said he, "but there's only one thing for you to do, tell them the fact, and let them have their inheritance. When lawyers once get hold of an estate it's dollars to dimes nobody else ever does, and by the time judgment is rendered it's a very small thing to be eaten up in fees and innumerable charges. You cannot count on a cent of it. You cannot say anything, speak for a drive, yet your team isn't at the door."

"—I—I had business to discuss with Mrs. McLane before he sent him to the West—a journey which I had much hoped to have Mrs. Parry had dissuaded him from making."

"Oh, bless you, no," responds Parry, cheerfully. "The doctor advises change of scene and air, doesn't he, Fan? And there's no scenery more beautiful than this. There's no scenery more beautiful than this, and there's more air than they know what to do with ten hours out of twelve, week doesn't it."

"Then I presume the residents of the post must be unusually charming to offset such monotony of landscape and such objectionable climate," says Swinburne, stuffily, and looking ruefully at the fair young widow. "I have not the honor of anybody's acquaintance here," he adds.

"So," says Parry. "Why, there's Captain and Mrs. Grafton, old friends of Fan's, you know—that is Mrs. Grafton, and there's Lieutenant Merriam—splendid fellow, that. We know him as well when he was on duty at the Point. And there's Minturn, of the artillery, who's often when Merriam was pillared. I'm about Fan here—Oh, yes, there's a raft of pleasant people there."

Mrs. Parry's pretty face at this juncture is a study. She is flushed, almost tearful; ready to pull Ned Parry's hair in her wrath, yet hardly able to resist the temptation to smile at Swinburne, who sits in open-mouthed dismay. For downright mischief a brother-in-law has opportunities accorded no other mortal, and Parry is at once his torment and her delight. Mrs. McLane has been known to say that Charlotte took a very mean advantage of her in front of the cage until the elevator before he ever saw the sunshine of her own lovely blue eyes.

"Very little alike were these two sisters, despite the fact that they had lived most of their life together. Educated abroad by a benevolent aunt after the death of their devoted mother, the girls had returned to America the great year of the Columbian fete, and Charlotte, the elder by two years, had met Ned Parry, a rising and increasing lawyer, before they had been home a month, and was engaged to him before the autumn

leaves were falling—before Fan even dreamed that anything of the kind was in contemplation, for she, the simple, the simply deliciously delightful time at the Point. Harriet Palmer, her especial friend at school, both at home and abroad, had married Captain Grafton early that spring. Fan making almost her first appearance in society as one of the bridesmaids on that occasion, and being much impressed with the devotion of the groomsmen assigned to her, a handsome, soldierly fellow by the name of Merriam, the son of an officer, but, being of the Captain's regiment and conveniently stationed at West Point, he had been called into requisition with others of his cloth, and a very pretty wedding they had had, and then, as luck would have it, Grafton himself was offered a commission in the regular army, and he was called to the far frontier so soon after their marriage, he accepted it, and there they spent the summer, and then Mrs. Parry and the Haywards joined them at Mrs. Grafton's urgent request, and there did Mr. Randolph Merriam fall deeply and devotedly in love with Charlotte, and no one wondered. By far and away she was the prettiest girl at the Point that summer, and Merriam was conceded to be a mighty lucky fellow. And so it was after the announcement of Charlotte Hayward's forthcoming marriage to Edward Parry, he allowed himself to be congratulated upon his engagement to her younger sister.

And he had every right to consider himself engaged. She had accepted his attentions, his devotion, eventually, and she had also his presents. He had called upon Aunt and Uncle Mellen in New York, the guardians of the girls, and started them all equally surprised by the announcement that Miss Hayward had accepted the offer of his heart and had conditioned only on their consent, which he brought them to give.

"I own I never thought of her marrying in the army," said Aunt Charlotte, as do other aunts and mothers after their girls have been campaigning at the Point.

"What income, if any, have you outside your pay?" was Uncle Mellen's question at the point of interrogation.

"Nothing, sir."

"Well, neither has she. That is, what has is so small it wouldn't keep that extravagant child in gloves and had better be sensible and think it over."

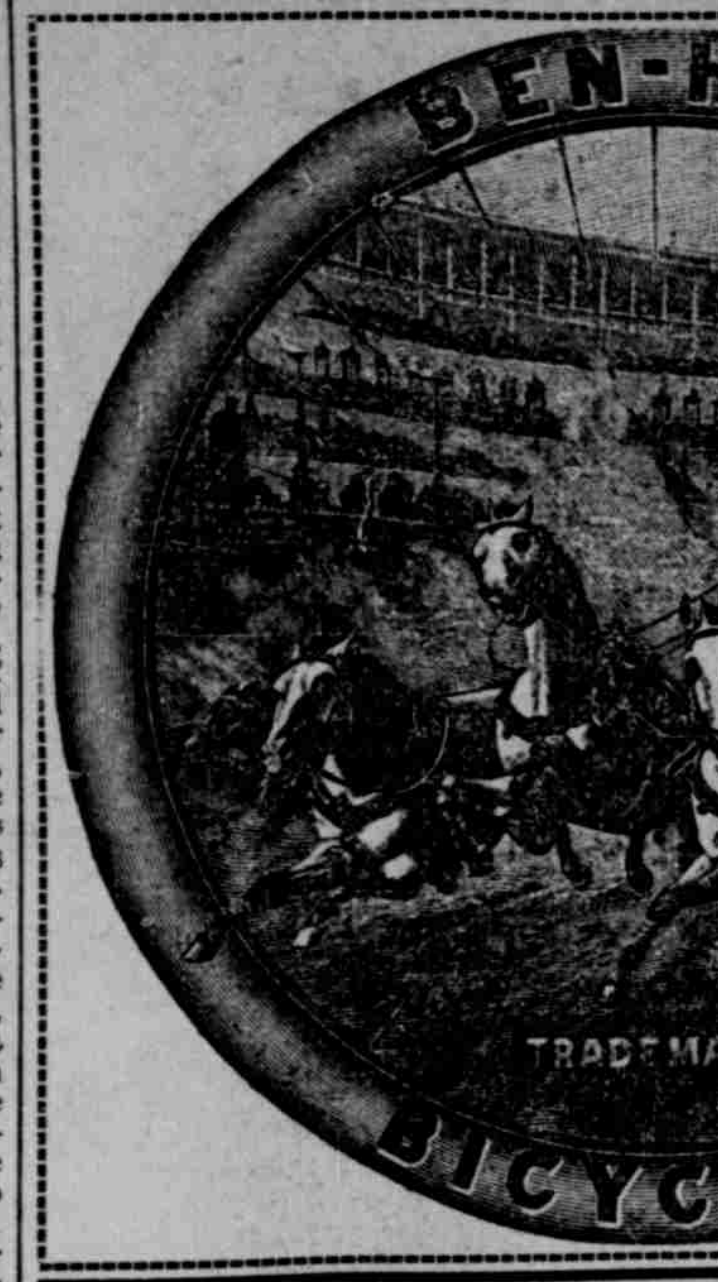
Randy Merriam did think it over, but all to no purpose. The more he thought, the more he declared himself hopelessly and irrevocably in love, and as Miss Parry took kindly to his protestations and Parry and Charlotte took kindly to him and sympathized with the soldier's love, who was evidently much of a gentleman and so much in love, it resulted in his being permitted to go on duty at the Point, and the wedding was held in the winter, Merriam had a good reason for believing that, despite the fact that the wedding reception held at the Mellen's beautiful home would be one in which he would be vitally interested.

Well, he was, but in the way or manner expected. In fact, he did not attend the ceremony or the reception; indeed, he was not bidden. A very disagreeable thing, and he was within a month after the Parry-Hayward wedding, one that overwhelmed him with mortification and distress, and caused no little indignation among his comrades.

Everybody knew Randy Merriam was in debt. He made no secret of it. He was extravagant in his tastes, had incurred obligations before going on duty at the Point, and found it impossible to "catch up" there. There were three or four accounts he had been asked to settle, and he had been running some time, but he put them off from month to month, hoping that he might soon be able to obtain possession of a small sum of money left by his father, who died a few years before. It was only a few thousand dollars, yet even that had been contested, together with a number of similar bequests, and the legal complications had been as exasperating as the law's delay could make them. One day soon after Charlotte's wedding Merriam was summoned to the presence of the superintendent and was regretfully told that four of his creditors had united to an appeal to the War Department, and the matter had been referred to him as post commander. Merriam was confounded. He had seen and talked with one of them only a few weeks before, and no such action had even been hinted at. Nor did he know that any one of their number was aware of his indebtedness to the others. Frankly he had told Miss Parry the matter before he told her of his love, but it made, apparently, no impression on her. "Let me have a few thousand dollars, and I'll be able to pay them ten times over," he had said, and later to Parry, who had grown like him, and who, as a lawyer, though his little inheritance could not be much longer withheld. It would free him; it would very prettily furnish them with a few hundred dollars to the fore. He remembered, too, that Uncle Mellen had made some inquiries of him, and that in perfect frankness he had told him that he was just at the moment when he was full of hope and happiness, came this cruel mortification. Such action on the part of the creditors was a very bad thing, and the superintendent said, it was a solemn fact. Deeply chagrined, he told the colonel the whole story, and the colonel was full of sympathy, but as full of sense.

"I'm sorry, Merriam," said he, "but there's only one thing for you to do, tell them the fact, and let them have their inheritance. When lawyers once get hold of an estate it's dollars to dimes nobody else ever does, and by the time judgment is rendered it's a very small thing to be eaten up in fees and innumerable charges. You cannot count on a cent of it. You cannot say anything, speak for a drive, yet your team isn't at the door."

"—I—I had business to discuss with Mrs. McLane before he sent him to the West—a journey which I had much hoped to have Mrs. Parry had dissuaded him from making."



TRADE MARK
BICYCLES

garrison at Sedgwick was peace and good will and every kindly relation when Randy Merriam came out in the December of the Columbian year, determined to take his punishment like a man. He was not a soldier, but he was a soldier of any and every kind. For a time he even declined to subscribe to the hope, which he brought them